



PRINTERS NEWS

■ DELL LAUNCHES CHEAP LASER

Dell has launched its Laser Printer 1100 for £81 including VAT and delivery. The printer is rated at 14 pages per minute and prints at a resolution of 600dpi. It's one of the cheapest printers on the market, although Samsung's ML1510 is available for just £70. We'll bring you a review very soon.

■ FASTER PRINTS

HP has launched its Photosmart 8250 colour inkjet printer. The company claims that it can print a 6x4" photo in 14 seconds. The printer uses six-colour cartridges for photo printing, but new technology means that less ink is wasted in priming the print heads.

The printer is available now for £180 from www.hp.co.uk.

■ NEW CANON BUSINESS MFP

Canon has added the MF5770 to its LaserBase range of MFPs.

The printer can produce mono prints at 1,200dpi using its 20 pages per minute laser engine. The MF5770 can also scan and copy documents using its built-in 2,400dpi scanner and 50-sheet auto feeder. The printer is aimed at small businesses and is available now for around £300.



REVIEW COMPACT PHOTO INKJET

EPSON PictureMate 500

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £162 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.epson.co.uk

This Epson replaces the existing PictureMate, which is our favourite compact photo printer. The 500 is a little larger than competing products that use dye-sublimation technology, but it's remarkably small for a six-colour inkjet. It weighs less than 3kg, and its integrated handle makes it easy to carry around.

This printer's most obvious improvement is its 6.1cm colour display, which offers previews of images from inserted memory cards. The screen isn't the sharpest we've seen, but its 320x240 resolution shows quite a bit of detail.

The direct printing menu is mostly easy to use, but the OK button often doesn't do what we'd expect; it kept returning us to the top menu instead of selecting the sub-level we intended. The PictureMate has a PictBridge port and slots for most common card formats, but the hinged cover that keeps them free of dust seems a little flimsy.

A new option for this model is a Lithium-ion battery, which allows it to be used away from a power socket. This slots neatly into the printer, which recharges it when plugged into the mains, but at around £50 it isn't cheap.

Epson says that the print speed of the new model has been improved, and it's quick enough at its default quality. Printing from a PC, we timed each borderless 6x4" photo at less than one minute and 40 seconds, and our standard six-print test took nine and a quarter minutes. Prints had accurate colours and looked better than those from most of its competitors, but suffered from a little grain.



As with the previous model, the PictureMate is much slower when printing at its best quality.

Repeating our test using the driver's Enhance Fine Detail option produced excellent prints with virtually no grain. However, at this quality our six test prints took 26 minutes and 41 seconds.

The PictureMate 500 uses the same 100-photo consumable pack as the previous model. This is available for as little as £22, so at around 22p per print, the Epson still has the best running costs for its class. Its print quality remains ahead of the pack, too, but it's a shame that Epson has discontinued the old model, which would have been better value for those not needing a screen.

Simon Handby

✓ Great print quality; portable and easy to use; cheap to run

✗ Expensive; highest-quality prints are slow

SPECIFICATIONS Six-colour 6x4" inkjet, 5,760x1,440 maximum resolution, USB Hi-speed and PictBridge interfaces. Part code C11C588081BZ

HOTLIST LASER PRINTER

SAMSUNG ML-2250

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £99 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk

Samsung's ML-2250 takes a single 5,000-page-rated consumable, which is enough for 10 reams of paper; each sheet costing 1.33p to print. Print quality is excellent. This printer has 16MB of memory and a 250-sheet input cassette, so it's well specified. You can also upgrade the memory and add networking. This is a great-value printer.

SPECIFICATIONS Mono laser, 1,200dpi, 20ppm maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed interface. Part code ML-2250/XEU



HOTLIST COLOUR LASER PRINTER

EPSON AcuLaser C1100

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £229 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.misco.co.uk

DETAILS www.epson.co.uk

Epson's C1100 is reasonably large for a four-pass colour laser and it's more tricky than many to set up. In our tests it came commendably close to Epson's claimed speeds, but the most welcome discovery was its superb all-round print quality. This is an excellent, inexpensive printer with reasonable running costs.

SPECIFICATIONS Colour laser, 600dpi, 25ppm mono/5ppm colour maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed interface. Part code C11C567001



HOTLIST MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL

HP Photosmart 2610

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £176 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

This MFP is a great all-rounder. Its scanner has no automatic document feeder, but it's fast and delivers good results. Text printing is quick, and affordable at 2.2p per page. Print and copy quality is excellent. At this price, its network port and built-in fax make it a bargain.

SPECIFICATIONS 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 2,400x4,800dpi scan resolution, USB, Wired 10/100 Ethernet and PictBridge USB interfaces. Part code Q5542B



REVIEW MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL

HP PSC 1410

RATING ★★
PRICE £62 inc VAT
SUPPLIER www.savastore.com
DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

There doesn't seem to be much new about the PSC 1410. It's exactly the same size as the PSC 1215 (see Hotlist, below), which it replaces. It's about as small as multifunction devices get. During printing, paper follows a U path from a front tray and comes to rest on top of the plain paper stack. Because there's no rear tray, you can push it to the back of a desk.

The eight function buttons and simple LED are enough to control everyday copy jobs without a PC. It's easy to set up, and has an automatic head alignment routine to help you get the best print quality. It comes with an extensive set of HP software, but even the minimum installation swallows 365MB of disk space.

The PSC 1410 offers a few improvements over its predecessor, the most welcome being that it can now print 6x4" photos without borders. Quality is fine for a four-ink printer, although sharp eyes will spot a small amount of grain. Unlike the PSC 1610 reviewed in *What's New, Shopper* September 2005, it isn't possible to use a photo cartridge for six-ink printing.

Print quality on plain paper is equally good, and black text in particular was pin-sharp in our tests. At 3.2 pages per minute (ppm), the HP was slow at its Normal setting. It reached 10ppm at Fast Draft, but ejected paper so forcefully that it spilled on the desk in an untidy, muddled pile.

Scans and copies were both competitively quick. Scans of regular text documents were



impressively sharp, despite the HP's comparatively low 600 dots per inch (dpi) resolution. Photographs were captured with faithful colours and good detail for a budget device.

One of the best aspects of the outgoing PSC 1215 was its ability to use high-capacity ink cartridges that lasted for 450 black or 400 colour pages. This gave it very low running costs, making it an ideal budget device.

The PSC 1410 accepts only 5ml supplies that last one third as long, which seems a big step backwards and makes it particularly expensive when printing in mono. For £10 more, Canon's PIXMA MP110 combines faster printing and similar quality with lower black ink costs.

Simon Handby

 Good print quality; decent scan quality

 Expensive to run; irritating installation process

SPECIFICATIONS 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 600x2,400dpi scan resolution, USB interface. **Part code** Q7290A

HOTLIST INKJET PRINTER

CANON PIXMA iP1500

RATING ★★★★★
PRICE £37 inc VAT
SUPPLIER www.savastore.com
DETAILS www.canon.co.uk

The iP1500 is the baby of Canon's PIXMA range and does without the advanced paper handling of the more expensive models. It's a great little printer, though, producing excellent text and good photographs quickly. It's the best affordable inkjet we've tested, but like other budget devices it's not cheap to run.

SPECIFICATIONS Four-colour inkjet, 4,800x1,200dpi maximum resolution, USB interface. **Part code** 9319A011AA


HOTLIST MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL

HP PSC 1215

RATING ★★★★★
PRICE £59 inc VAT
SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

This small and stylish multifunction peripheral would suit anyone who is short of money or space. It has a fairly basic driver and comes with limited but useful software. Copies, scans and prints are all very high-quality, but printing is fairly slow. Running costs are low at 2.7p per mono and 4.7p per colour page. Advanced users might not be satisfied by its simplicity, but beginners will love it.

SPECIFICATIONS 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 600x2,400dpi scan resolution, USB interface. **Part code** Q5894A



BYTE SIZE!



Our round-up of the best new gadgets and software

SAITEK Gaming Keyboard

RATING ★★★★★
PRICE £32 inc VAT
SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.saitek.com

The gentle blue backlight and industrial look of Saitek's Gaming Keyboard makes it a winner in our books. As well as having good looks, it's very well built. The wrist rest can be extended away from the keyboard to suit hands of any size, while the wide legs feel less prone to breaking than those on other keyboards. It's also very comfortable to type on.

It comes with a separate nine-key number pad, which is recognised as a gaming controller in Windows. It has two mode buttons as well, so it can perform up to 27 different functions.

The Gaming Keyboard will be more useful on strategy games than first-person shooters. It's quite expensive, but its good build quality and programmable nature give it wide appeal.

David Ludlow



SAITEK Gaming Mouse

RATING ★★★★★
PRICE £21 inc VAT
SUPPLIER www.girotech.com
DETAILS www.saitek.com

Saitek's Gaming Mouse has a 1,600dpi optical sensor, which makes it around twice as sensitive as the average desktop mouse. This means you have to move it less to cover the same onscreen distance.

While not great for Windows work, this is perfect for first-person shooters. The sensor makes it quicker to turn and more accurate when aiming at your opponents.

The design is slick and the mouse moves easily over any surface. It's suitable for left- and right-handed people, and has the usual array of buttons. There are also programmable web browser navigation buttons and a button to put the mouse in 800dpi mode for use in Windows. For gamers it will make a big difference, but for everyone else it's not worth the money.

David Ludlow





REVIEW COLOUR LASER MFP

EPSON
AcuLaser CX11NF

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £625 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.misco.co.ukDETAILS www.epson.co.uk

Last month we reviewed HP's Color LaserJet 2820 (*What's New, Shopper* September 2005), which was the first affordable colour laser multifunction peripheral we'd seen. This similar Epson model has a fax facility and a faster printer than the HP, but it scans at a lower optical resolution.

With its top-mounted scanner, the AcuLaser seems particularly tall and imposing. It's not as heavy as it looks, though, and setting it up didn't prove too taxing. Fitting the consumables involved removing a few transit caps, but the clear screen provided some guidance.

Epson's software installation detected the AcuLaser over our network and configured it with the minimum of fuss. Both prints and scans can be made over the Ethernet interface, but we were surprised to find that no fax print driver had been installed. This is a frustration, but at least the 50-sheet automatic document feeder (ADF) makes conventional faxing easy.

The CX11NF uses the same print engine as the AcuLaser C1100 (see *Hotlist*, page 26), and it performed similarly in our tests. It prints text with exceptionally sharp outlines, and its greyscale and colour photo prints are among the best we've seen from a laser printer. Business graphics are enhanced by strong, vibrant colours.

The printer was also quite quick, delivering the first page of our letter test in just 10 seconds, and completing all 50 copies of the letter at a rate of 23.6 pages per minute (ppm). The four-pass engine couldn't match this speed in colour, but its

rate of 4.6ppm on our mixed-colour test was very respectable.

The Epson's scanner is quick for an MFP, taking under seven seconds to preview an A4 page. Scanning the same page at 300dpi took 11 seconds. Our test images were sharp with unusually good levels of detail, but suffered a slight blue colour bias that was also noticeable on colour copies. Duplicating a 10-page document using the ADF took two minutes and 16 seconds in colour, and just 35 seconds in mono.

The CX11NF is quicker than HP's similar LaserJet, and its scans and prints are better. It's a little less compact and costs slightly more to run, but with no other competition it's our Best Buy.

Simon Handby

- ✓ Quick printing and copying; easy network setup; great print quality
- ✗ Limited paper handling; colour costs could be lower

SPECIFICATIONS 600dpi print resolution, 25ppm mono/5ppm colour maximum speed, 600x600 scan resolution, USB Hi-speed and 10/100 Ethernet interfaces. **Part code** C11C588081BZ

CHOOSING AN...

INKJET
PRINTER

Follow our step-by-step guide to identify your ideal inkjet

- 1** You can get a decent inkjet for under £70. With the minimum spec shown below, high-quality printing is possible, but slow. The actual print speed of inkjets can be half the quoted (maximum) speed on text documents, and even slower when printing graphics. Entry-level inkjets such as these are designed only for light use as they are flimsy and expensive to run.
- 2** Spending £100 will get you a much more capable printer that is either faster and better built or better at reproducing photos. If your priority is documents, you'll want double the minimum speed and half the print costs of the sub-£70 printer. Look for inkjets that can handle all your office media, including envelopes and labels.
- 3** If your priority is photos, speed is less important. Instead, choose a printer that can reproduce subtle tones well. Only hands-on testing, not specifications, will tell you this. Borderless printing (right up to the edge of the paper) should also be possible for £120. Pay particular attention to running costs: photos use three times as much ink as regular colour documents.
- 4** Heavy-duty office inkjets can cost up to £1,000 and their build quality is improving. A duplex unit and A3 capability, starting at around £300, are also worth considering. Large, individually replaceable ink tanks can cut running costs.
- 5** Pricier photo printers allow you to print digital photos by plugging memory cards straight in – no PC is required. An LCD preview screen gives you more control over this.

FILL IN YOUR SPECS HERE
(Recommended minimum in grey)

PAGE SIZE: A4
QUOTED SPEED: 18ppm mono,
12ppm colour
PRICE PER PAGE: 4p mono,
8p colour
RESOLUTION: 1,200x4,800dpi
INK COLOURS: Four in two tanks
FEATURES:

HOTLIST INKJET PRINTER

HP
Photosmart 8150

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £124 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.hp.co.uk

This printer uses HP's new ink cartridges and comes with six-ink printing as standard. The optional black cartridge printed draft text at 17.5 ppm.

This printer excels with photos, though, and it produces natural-looking prints with accurate colours. Best of all, it is equipped with PictBridge and memory card support, and has superb direct printing features.



SPECIFICATIONS Six-colour inkjet, 1,200x4,800dpi maximum resolution, USB and PictBridge interfaces. **Part code** Q3399B

HOTLIST INKJET PRINTER

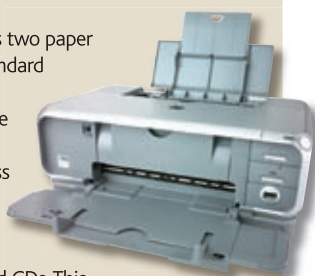
CANON
PIXMA iP3000

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £67 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.comDETAILS www.canon.co.uk

The iP3000 has two paper input trays, standard duplex printing and a PictBridge USB port. It prints borderless A4 photos and can even print on specially coated CDs. This is an impressive and unique set of abilities for the price, and yet it's also quick, cheap to run and has high print quality.



SPECIFICATIONS Four-colour inkjet, 1,200x4,800dpi maximum resolution, USB and PictBridge interfaces. **Part code** 9316A011AA